

Conservation Farmer of the Year Selected in Vermilion Parish

Eddie Jude Lewis, Sr. has been farming in south Louisiana for 40 years. He is a sugarcane producer who operates a 2,750-acre farm located three parishes (counties)—Lafayette, Iberia, and Vermilion Parishes.

Mr. Lewis has participated in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program since it began in 1997, installing grade stabilization structures (pipedrops) and agronomic practices for erosion control.

“Growing sugarcane is very unique,” explained Lewis. “You need special equipment and in many cases very large equipment to harvest the cane. The pipedrops that I have installed on my farms have really helped me eliminate small gullies or ‘wash outs’ which occur at the ends of our drains. Not only are the ‘wash outs’ costly in terms of soil erosion, they can also damage our equipment. EQIP has helped reduce erosion and equipment damage, not to mention improving the water quality of the bayous in our area.”

Lewis’ wife, Lilly Mae, takes care of the accounting duties of the farm; his daughter Karen, takes care of the secretarial work; and his sons, Kenry and Eddie Jr., help out with all the other hundreds of farm duties.

Every year, the Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District, whose area of work includes Vermilion Parish, recognizes one farmer, cattle producer, or other landowner who does outstanding work in soil and water conservation. In 1999, Lewis was selected as the *District Cooperator of the Year* by district, an honor Lewis will long remember.

“Being selected as conservation farmer of the year was a real honor for me,” said Lewis. “The Vermilion Conservation District has helped our farmers a lot through the years. Conservation district and NRCS personnel have helped me plan and install many EQIP practices and I am grateful for that assistance.”

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is working well in Louisiana. Every year thousands of landowners like Eddie Jude Lewis, Sr., get the opportunity to sign up for this USDA program that has been proven to be successful in conserving natural resources and protecting water quality.